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AUTHOR Evans, J. Robert; Hughey, Jim D.
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ABSTRACT

To determine if an interviewer's orientation toward satisfaction and commitment actually produced different interviewee reactions in these two areas, 20 interviewers conducted an informative and persuasive interview with two different sets of five interviewees (physical education majors). The Conversation Self-Report Inventory (CSRI) was used to identify the satisfaction-oriented and commitment-oriented patterns of interviewers. In one encounter, the interviewer was instructed to gain the subjects' reactions to a proposed physical education course. In another encounter, the interviewer was instructed to gain a commitment from the subjects to sign up for the proposed course. Communication satisfaction was measured by a linear rating scale while commitment was measured using a Thurstone-type instrument. Results showed that communication satisfaction was a function of communication responsiveness, regardless of the purpose of the encounter. Generally speaking, informative encounters produced more satisfaction than persuasive encounters. Behavioral commitment was also found to be a function of communication responsiveness. Both communication responsiveness and individual differences played a role in securing commitment from others. However, there was no support for the role of communicative purpose. It was concluded that the CSRI could be used to identify interviewers' communication patterns. (HOD)

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ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE SATISFACTION AND COMMITMENT AS A FUNCTION OF INTERVIEWER COMMUNICATION RESPONSIVENESS

by

J. Robert Evans
Jim D. Hughey

Ten flexible responsive and ten mastery responsive interviewers conducted informative and persuasive group interviews under controlled conditions. Interviewees responded to satisfaction and commitment measures following the interviews. It was found that both satisfaction and commitment are, in part, a function of interviewer responsiveness.

J. Robert Evans is Chancellor of National University in San Diego, California. Jim D. Hughey is a Professor of Speech Communication at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, phone 405-624-6150.

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INTERVIEWEE SATISFACTION AND COMMITMENT AS A FUNCTION OF INTERVIEWER COMMUNICATION RESPONSIVENESS

Interviewee satisfaction and, depending on the purpose of the interview, behavioral commitment are two outcomes often sought by interviewers (Kahn & Cannell, 1964; Richardson, Dohrenwend, & Klein, 1965; Goyer, Redding, & Rickey, 1968; Stewart & Cash, 1974; Stano & Reinsch, 1982). This study examined empirically how these two outcomes are related to the communication responsiveness of the interviewer.

Several years ago, Rogers and Roethlisberger (1952) typified two common communication patterns representing different levels of communication responsiveness. One pattern, the flexible responsive pattern, is oriented toward producing satisfaction in communicative encounters. Communicators with this orientation believe "Communication has failed when B does not feel free to express his feelings to A because B fears they will not be accepted by A. Communication is facilitated when on the part of A or B or both there is a willingness to express and accept differences" (pp. 46-47). The other pattern, the mastery responsive pattern, is oriented toward producing commitment in communicative encounters. Communicators with this orientation believe communication "has failed when B does not accept what A has to say as being fact, true, or valid; and the goal of

communication is to get B to agree to A's opinions, ideas, facts, or information" (pp. 46-47).

The first purpose of this study was to discover if individuals with these two communication patterns could be identified using a self-report, paper and pencil test. Much time and money is spent by organizations to find and train competent interviewers. If a simple paper and pencil test could identify the level of communication responsiveness of individuals, it would aid the organization in the selection and training of their interviewers. In the selection process, the self-report measure could supplement procedures used in the screening of applicants; and training could be adapted more specifically to the needs of the individual interviewer.

The second purpose was to see if an interviewer's self-reported communication patterns are actually translated into measurable interviewer behavior. In other words, we wanted to discover if an interviewer's orientations toward satisfaction and commitment actually produced different interviewee reactions in these two areas. We felt it was of theoretical import to investigate the connection between a person's self-reported communication responsiveness and the outcomes actually produced in an interview.

Festinger (1964) has questioned the relationship between a person's professed orientation toward action and his/her actual behavior. He argued that under some circumstances self-reported intentions and behavior do not correlate with actual behavior. Consequently, we wanted to investigate the

connection between the self-reports of interviewer communication behavior and the actual outcomes produced during the interview.

Overviewing the study, we used a paper and pencil test, the CSRI (Conversation Self-Report Inventory), to identify the satisfaction-oriented and commitment-oriented patterns of interviewers. A summary detailing the development of the inventory and research findings concerning the inventory is given by Leesavan (1977). The CSRI measures the communication responsiveness, i.e., the sensitivity to verbal and nonverbal messages, of individuals engaged in interpersonal communication encounters. The test is constructed in such a way that a high responsiveness score is reflective of the satisfaction-oriented pattern described by Rogers and Roethlisberger and a low score is reflective of the commitment-oriented pattern. High scorers and low scorers on the CSRI conducted both informative and persuasive group interviews. Following the interviews, the interviewees responded to communication satisfaction and behavioral commitment measures.

HYPOTHESES

Two central hypotheses, along with various subhypotheses, were postulated.

The first central hypothesis and subhypotheses were:

1H: Communication satisfaction is, in part, a function of communication responsiveness, regardless of the purpose of the communicative encounter.

$1H_1$: Flexible responsives produce greater

satisfaction than mastery responsives in informative encounters.

$1H_2$: Flexible responsives produce greater satisfaction than mastery responsives in persuasive encounters.

In addition to Rogers and Roethlisberger (1952), the communication literature suggests that some communicative patterns produce satisfying communicative climates, while others produce unsatisfying climates. Gibb's (1961) description of supportive and defensive climates, along with Kahn and Cannell's (1964) characterization of intrinsic motivation, typify patterns of flexible responsiveness and mastery responsiveness. On the one hand, we have individuals who accept others and their ideas; on the other hand, we have individuals who actively reject others and their ideas. We felt that flexible responsives would produce greater satisfaction regardless of the communicative purpose of the encounter.

The second central hypothesis and subhypotheses were:

2H: Behavioral commitment is, in part, a function of communication responsiveness.

$2H_1$: Mastery responsives produce greater behavioral commitment than flexible responsives in informative encounters.

$2H_2$: Mastery responsives and flexible responsives do not differ in terms of producing behavioral commitment in persuasive encounters.

Because the mastery responsive believes communication has one purpose and that that purpose is influencing the other, we believed that mastery responsives would gain greater commitment regardless of the communicative purpose. Because the flexible responsive believes communication has many purposes and that understanding is the ultimate goal, we felt that high sensitives would not gain as much commitment in the informative interview; but when the purpose is to persuade, the flexible responsive would secure as much commitment as the mastery responsive.

METHODOLOGY

The type of communicative encounter studied in the experiment was the group interview where one party was designated as the interviewer and five subjects were designated as the interviewees. Each interviewer conducted an informative and persuasive interview with two different sets of five interviewees. A total of twenty interviewers, ten with flexible responsive patterns and ten with mastery responsive patterns, conducted a total of 40 interviews with a total of 200 subjects acting as interviewees.

Independent Variables

Two independent variables were of main interest: communication responsiveness and communicative purpose of the encounter.

Communication responsiveness was operationalized in the following manner. The CSRI was administered to more than 200 undergraduate and graduate physical education majors. Males

who scored in roughly the upper third and lower third were solicited to participate in the study. A total of twenty majors volunteered to act as interviewers in the study, ten from the upper third and ten from the lower third of the original pool. None of the interviewers had had any formal interviewing training. Thus communication responsiveness was partitioned into two levels: flexible responsiveness and mastery responsiveness.

The validity and reliability of the version of the CSRI used in this study is discussed by Neal (1970). He reports that the inventory has high content, concurrent, predictive, and construct validity. Neal (1970) reports Kuder-Richardson-20 reliability estimates ranging from .75 to .83 ($p < .01$), a split-half correlation of 4 = .73 ($p < .01$), and a test-retest correlation of $r = .77$ ($p < .$).

Communicative purpose was operationalized by having the interviewers engage in two different encounters with different sets of interviewees. In one encounter, the interviewer was instructed to conduct an information-gathering session and to gain the subjects' reactions to a proposed physical education course. In another encounter, the interviewer was instructed to conduct a persuasive encounter and to gain a commitment from the subjects to sign-up for the proposed course. The proposed course was fictitious. In a pilot study, it had been determined that the course, "Sport Spectating," had neutral appeal ($\bar{X} = 4.15$, on a nine-point scale with 5.00 being neutral).

In order to account for expected individual differences among the various interviewers, a third variable was introduced into the research design. Each interviewer was treated as a level of a variable labeled, "Interviewer Differences."

Dependent Variables

Two measures were used to estimate the outcomes of the interview encounters: a satisfaction measure and a commitment measure.

Communication satisfaction was measured by a linear rating scale. The scale asked:

> How satisfied were you by the way the interviewer conducted the interview?

The points on the scale ranged from 1 (extremely satisfied) through 5 (neutral response) to 9 (extremely unsatisfied). The scale was adapted from speaker effectiveness scales used by Foster (1969) and Hughey (1966). Test-retest reliability for the scale was $r = .83$ ($p < .01$).

Commitment was measured using a Thurstone-type instrument that had proven reliable and valid in previous studies (Foster, 1969; Hughey, 1966). The scale values for the instrument are the same as the item number. The scale is reproduced below.

WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO THE NEW P. E. COURSE?

1. I understand by checking this number that I have agreed to enroll in the course and that the registrar will send me a bill for the preregistration fee of $10.00.

2. I definitely will sign up for the course and pay the $10.00 preregistration fee, but I will go to the registrar's office myself within the next two weeks to complete the registration forms and pay the fee.
3. I will enroll in the course, and I will pay the course fee at registration.
4. I am not sure about the course; I would like to talk to someone further about it.
5. I am apathetic or indifferent about the whole course.
6. I doubt if I'll enroll in the course.
7. The course may be a good idea, but it is definitely not for me.
8. I don't think the course is a good idea, and it is definitely not for me.
9. I don't think the course is a good idea, and I will tell my friends not to enroll in it.

The test-retest reliability for the scale was $r = .98$ ($p < .01$; Foster, 1969).

Interviewee Sample

Two hundred interviewees were randomly selected from the required physical education classes for males only at the _____. Interviewees were selected on the basis of a table of random numbers from the class listings for the courses and randomly assigned to an interviewing session.

Administrative Procedures

Prior to the interviews, the interviewers were briefly instructed on the informative and persuasive encounters. The rationale given the interviewers for the two sessions was to aid the researcher in gaining information concerning the congruency of perceptions between professional physical education people and non-professionals under informative and persuasive conditions. The order of the interview sessions was randomly determined. Each of the five interviewees was involved in only one interview. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes. After the interview, the interviewer asked the interviewees to stay in the room, and he left. The researcher then entered and distributed the instruments to the interviewees.

The Research Design

The study used a posttest only, experimental design. Communicative purpose was the only variable actively manipulated in the experiment, with the communication responsiveness factor and interviewer factor being attribute variables.

A partial hierarchical ANOVA model was used in the statistical analysis (Winer, 1962). In the 2 x 10 x 2 model, Factor A was communication responsiveness of the interviewer, with level A_1 being flexible responsiveness and A_2 being mastery responsiveness interviewers. Factor B, interviewers, was considered to be nested in Factor A. Factor B(A) was treated in this manner in order to account for the expected differences among the individual interviewers. Because of the nesting,

Factor B(A) had 10 levels associated with it; these levels corresponded to the number of interviewers nested in level A_1 and the number in level A_2. Factor C was communicative purpose of the interview session, with level C_1 being the informative interview and C_2 being the persuasive interview. Each cell in the model had five subjects, with a total N of 200.

Prior to the experiment, individual comparisons of the appropriate AC cell totals were planned in order to test the subhypotheses cited earlier (Winer, 1962).

RESULTS

The first hypothesis stated that communication satisfaction is, in part, a function of communication responsiveness, regardless of the purpose of the encounter. The results are summarized in Table I. This central hypothesis was confirmed ($p < .01$). In addition, the significance of Factor B(A) ($p < .01$) confirmed our expectations that individual differences other than responsiveness play a role in communication satisfaction. Furthermore, an unhypothesized relationship between communication satisfaction and communicative purpose was found: generally speaking, informative encounters produced more satisfaction than persuasive encounters ($p < .05$).

Insert Table I about here

Our two subhypotheses were:

$1H_1$: Flexible responsives produce greater satisfaction than mastery responsives in informative encounters.

$1H_2$: Flexible responsives produce greater satisfaction than mastery responsives in persuasive encounters.

Table II presents the results of the individual comparisons of the appropriate AC totals. Both subhypotheses were confirmed ($p < .01$).

Insert Table II about here

The second central hypothesis stated that behavioral commitment is, in part, a function of communication responsiveness. The results summarized in Table III confirm this hypothesis.

Insert Table III about here

Both communication responsiveness ($p < .05$) and individual differences ($p < .01$) played a role in securing commitment from others. However, there was no support for the role of communicative purpose. The reason for this seemingly paradoxical finding is made evident by an examination of the results pertaining to the two subhypotheses.

The two subhypotheses were:

$2H_1$: Mastery responsives produce greater behavioral commitment than flexible responsives in informative encounters.

$2H_2$: Mastery responsives and flexible responsives do not differ in terms of producing behavioral commitment in persuasive encounters.

Table IV presents the results of the individual comparisons of the appropriate AC totals. Subhypothesis $2H_1$ was confirmed ($p < .01$), and $2H_2$ was not rejected. The results suggest that mastery responsives did not alter their persuasive goals in informative situations. The mastery responsives secured virtually the same amount of commitment regardless of communicative purpose. Consequently, Factor C in the ANOVA table was nonsignificant. The flexible responsives secured as much commitment as the low sensitive in persuasive encounters but significantly less in informative encounters. It appears that high scorers on the CSRI were more sensitive to communicative purpose than low scorers.

Insert Table IV about here

DISCUSSION

The finding that communication responsiveness is related to communication satisfaction is consistent with theories of interpersonal communication (Steinberg & Miller, 1975). The

flexible responsive, as an "understander" or empathizer concerned with communication as an exchange of feelings, produces a favorable communicative climate. The mastery responsive, as a "controller" or manipulator concerned with influence rather than understanding, creates an atmosphere that fosters less than satisfying communicative outcomes. Within the framework suggested by Johannesen (1971) and Poulakos (1974), the flexible responsive engages in a dialogical mode of discourse whereas the low sensitive pursues a monological mode. Kahn and Cannell (1964) used the term "intrinsic motivation" to describe the satisfying psychological climate created by a communicator who accepts others and their ideas. Gibb (1961) contrasts the satisfaction derived from supportiveness and the discomfort derived from defensiveness in a relationship.

The unhypothesized finding that informative encounters are generally more satisfying than persuasive encounters is consistent with theory. An accepted tenet of persuasion is that change in behavior is preceded by need arousal, a dissatisfaction with the status quo, or an uncomfortable tension (Simons, 1976). Often, after a commitment is made, post-decisional dissonance occurs (Cox, 1961; Brehm & Colen, 1962). It seems reasonable that there would be more residual dissonance, or uncomfortable tension, in a persuasive encounter than in an informative encounter and that this would be reflected on a communication satisfaction scale.

However, it appears that flexible responsives are better able to reduce this dissonance than low sensitives. In both

the informative and persuasive encounters, the flexible responsives produced more satisfaction than the mastery responsives. This finding is consistent with Hart and Burks' (1972) notion that the rhetorically sensitive individual tries to accept role-taking as a part of the human condition and is willing to undergo the strain of adaptation. By empathizing with and adapting to the needs of the other in the persuasive encounter, the flexible responsive should be adept at helping others to work through the tensions associated with accepting a new behavior.

But this is not to say that the mastery responsive has any trouble in getting people to "sign on the dotted line." As controllers concerned with influence rather than understanding, low scorers on the CSRI produced greater commitment in their interviewees than high scorers. Regardless of the specified purpose of the encounter, the mastery responsives influenced others. On the other hand, high scorers seemed to be more sensitive to communicative purpose. When their goal was persuasion, they produced as much commitment as low scorers, but when the high scorers had an informative purpose, they produced significantly less commitment than low scorers. These findings are consistent with the notion that high scorers are more flexible and adaptable. Within the framework developed by Rogers and Roethlisberger (1952), the high scorer views communication as having many purposes with an exchange of points of view being the ultimate criterion of effectiveness; the low scorer regards successful communication as getting a view adopted by the other.

As was expected factors other than communication sensitivity influence satisfaction and commitment. This was reflected by the individual differences factor included in the ANOVA's. In each case this factor was significant ($p < .01$).

This study supports that the CSRI can be used to identify interviewers possessing different communication patterns and that these self-reported patterns are indicative of actual interviewing behavior. Our work with the CSRI in our own classes has reinforced this conclusion. Moreover, we have found that identifying the patterns of communication early in a course permits us to tailor the instruction in interpersonal communication to the student. Particularly in our interviewing courses, the use of the CSRI allows us to focus more precisely on the needs and professional objectives of the student. Students with high flexible responsive patterns are introduced to materials and experiences that allow the refinement of their response repertoire. Those with mastery responsive patterns are introduced to alternative modes of responding that produce interviewee satisfaction as well as behavioral commitment.

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TABLE I

THE EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION RESPONSIVENESS ON COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F	Communication Satisfaction Means***	
					C_1	C_2
A Communication Responsiveness	1	34.45	34.45	16.98*		
B(A) Interviewer Differences	18	107.81	5.99	2.95*		
					A_1 2.14	2.56
C Communication Purpose	1	8.41	8.41	4.14*		
					A_2 2.98	3.38
A x C	1	0.00	0.00	0.00		
B(A) x C	18	43.69	2.43	1.20		
Within cell	160	324.60	2.03			

*p < .05

**p < .01

***The possible range was 1-9, with 1 = High satisfaction and 9 = Low satisfaction.

TABLE II

A COMPARISON OF THE COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION PRODUCED BY FLEXIBLE RESPONSIVES AND MASTERY RESPONSIVES IN INFORMATIVE AND PERSUASIVE ENCOUNTERS

Type of Encounter	Cell* Totals	D	df	$\frac{D^2}{Error}$	F
Informative					
Flexible Responsives (A_1C_1)	107				
vs		42	1, 160	$\frac{1764.0}{202.8}$	8.70**
Mastery Responsives (A_2C_1)	149				
Persuasive					
Flexible Responsives (A_1C_2)	128				
vs		41	1, 160	$\frac{1681.0}{202.8}$	8.29**
Mastery Responsives (A_2C_2)	169				

*A low total = High satisfaction, a high total = Low satisfaction.

**$p < .01$

TABLE III

THE EFFECTS OF COMMUNICATION RESPONSIVENESS ON BEHAVIORAL COMMITMENT

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F	Behavioral Commitment Means***	
A Communication Responsiveness	1	15.13	15.13	5.43*		
					C_1	C_2
B(A) Interviewer Differences	18	142.97	7.94	2.85**		
					A_1 5.86	5.28
C Communication Purpose	1	1.13	1.13	0.40		
					A_2 4.86	5.16
A x C	1	9.25	9.25	3.32		
B(A) x C	18	83.53	4.64	1.67		
Within cell	160	445.60	2.79			

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

***The possible range was 1-9, with 1 = High commitment and 9 = Low commitment.

TABLE IV

A COMPARISON OF THE BEHAVIORAL COMMITMENT PRODUCED BY FLEXIBLE RESPONSIVES AND MASTERY RESPONSIVES IN INFORMATIVE AND PERSUASIVE ENCOUNTERS

Type of Encounter	Cell* Totals	D	df	$\frac{D^2}{\text{Error}}$	F
Informative					
Flexible Responsive (A_1C_1)	293				
vs		50	1, 160	$\frac{2500.0}{278.5}$	8.98**
Mastery Responsive (A_2C_1)	243				
Persuasive					
Flexible Responsives (A_1C_2)	264				
vs		6	1, 160	$\frac{36.0}{278.5}$	0.13
Mastery Responsives (A_2C_2)	258				

*A low total = High commitment, a high total = Low commitment.

**$p < .01$